

Remarks

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the above amendments and in light of the following remarks and discussion, is respectfully requested.

Applicants respectfully request entry of this response, as the response places the application in clear condition for allowance. Specifically, Applicants have rewritten claims in accordance with the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter, have amended dependent claims to depend from allowable claims, and have canceled rejected independent claims.

Upon entry of this response, Claims 24-28 remain pending; Claims 12 and 13 having been presently canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, and Claims 24-28 having been presently amended. Applicants understand that Replacement Figure 17, filed August 28, 2003, has been approved.

Initially, Applicants respectfully assert that the Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) filed on August 28, 2003, includes a typographical error. Specifically, with respect to document number AQ, the IDS states the application no. (Sho 56-178351) of the English language translation of the Japanese document instead of the document no. (Sho 58-81113). Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner initial and execute the enclosed List of References Cited by Applicant evidencing the Examiner's previous consideration of the English language translation of the Japanese document, and return a copy of the List with the next Patent Office communication.

Applicants express thanks for the Examiner's indication that dependent Claims 24 and 25 recite allowable subject matter, such that the dependent claims, although currently objected to, would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. In response, Applicants have so-rewritten the claims. Applicants have amended remaining dependent Claims 26-28 to depend from newly independent Claims 24 and 25. Applicants have further amended

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Claims 24-28 in a non-narrowing manner to remedy potential informalities and to place the claims in better conformity with standard U.S. practice. Thus, Applicants respectfully request the allowance of Claims 24-30.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 12, 13, and 26-28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Figure 17 of the application (Figure 17) or U.S. Patent No. 4,697,734 to Ueda and U.S. Patent No. 4,698,980 to Noguchi et al. (Noguchi). Claims 12, 13, and 26-28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ueda and Noguchi, and further in view of any one of Japanese Publication No. 6-270644 or U.S. Patent No. 5,881,994 to Stevenson et al. or U.S. Patent No. 4,638,977 to Vonhausen or Japanese Publication No. 58-81113 to Kato et al. or Japanese Publication No. 61-88807 to Miyanaga et al. Applicants respectfully assert that the rejections have been overcome for the above reasons.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal Allowance. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 24-28 is earnestly solicited.

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Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

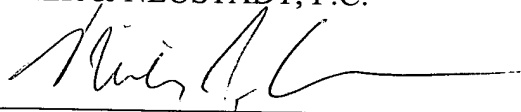
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Respectfully submitted,

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